

Section 4.18

Visual Resources

This section discusses visual resources within the study area. Although the visual conditions in the study area have not changed since publication of the June 2000 Final EIS, planned development in the area has continued, which could affect views of the proposed highway from offsite. In addition, the proposed embankment height associated with the build alternatives has changed, which may reduce visual impacts associated with the proposed action.

4.18.1 Approach and Methodology

4.18.1.1 Changes since June 2000 Final EIS

To update the affected environment and environmental consequences information associated with visual resources in the study area, Sections 3.18 and 4.18 of the Final EIS were reviewed to determine whether any changes had taken place since publication of the Final EIS. The northern and southern study area limits for this section are the same as those described in Section 4.0.1, *Study Area*; however, the western and eastern study area boundaries have been extended to accommodate the larger viewshed in the proximity of the proposed action. As a result, the study area for this section is bound on the east by the Wasatch Mountains and on the west by Antelope Island and Great Salt Lake.

HDR Engineering conducted a reconnaissance-level field survey of the study area on September 26, 2003. Project orthophotographs from the Final EIS were also compared to recent orthophotographs of the study area to determine whether there had been any changes in visual conditions.

To analyze visual resources, the Final EIS relied on the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Visual Resources Contrast Rating System. The rating system was used to inventory and evaluate the visual resources in the study area based on the following two viewer groups.

- Offsite viewers who would be looking at the proposed Legacy Parkway.
- Onsite viewers (i.e., users of the proposed Legacy Parkway) who would be looking from the parkway at the surrounding area.

The Final EIS also divided viewers within the visual study area into the following three principal subgroups.

- Travelers along existing arterial streets, highways, and freeways, such as Redwood Road and I-15, that traverse the project area.

- Residents of neighborhoods, including those in the Davis County foothills area and new Foxboro development.
- People engaging in recreation at existing sites, including the Bountiful City Pond and the FBWMA.

In addition, 14 key observation points (KOPs) were analyzed in the Final EIS to assess the visual impacts of the proposed action; 10 KOPs were views of Legacy Parkway from offsite and four KOPs were views of offsite from the proposed highway. Section 3.18.2 of the Final EIS describes these KOPs in detail; Figure 4.18-1 herein, which updates Figure 3-26 in the Final EIS, shows the location of these KOPs.

4.18.1.2 Changes since Draft Supplemental EIS

For various reasons—including minor alignment modifications, updates of information, and corrections of inadvertent miscalculations—changes have been made to the calculations of impacts for some resources since the Draft Supplemental EIS was published in December 2004. For this visual resources section, no changes have occurred since the publication of the Draft Supplemental EIS that required changing the calculation of impacts on visual resources. However, several new housing developments have been planned, and the visual affects analysis has been revised to consider visual impacts on these developments.

4.18.2 Affected Environment

This affected environment section presents a summary of updated information on the affected environment relative to visual resources. No new data was found to indicate that the existing visual conditions or identified viewer groups in the study area had changed since publication of the Final EIS. Continued residential, commercial, and industrial development in the study area has occurred, which could affect views of the proposed highway from offsite. However, this continued development has not substantively changed the status of the affected environment associated with visual resources.

4.18.2.1 Development in Study Area since Publication of Final EIS

Residential, industrial, and commercial development has continued since publication of the Final EIS, including partial construction of the following two new housing developments in the study area.

- Foxboro housing development in North Salt Lake.
- Farmington Ranches housing development in Farmington.

The Foxboro housing development is being constructed in North Salt Lake west of Redwood Road between Center Street and 900 North on a 110-ha (272-ac) site. The development was platted in 2003, is currently under development, and will include a mixed-use development with homes, parks, a planned elementary school, a church, and commercial zoning along Redwood Road. It will include a total of 1,250 homes, 240 of which are low- to moderate-income housing units, including 12 Housing and Urban Development (HUD)–supported transitional housing units. Multiple homes and up to five multi-family buildings of three stories in height are already built or near completion.

Farmington Ranches is a development of single-family residential housing currently under construction west of the Davis County fairgrounds at 1525 West Clark Lane. It is a 288-ha (711-ac) housing development with a total of 540 single-family lots and an elementary school. The development is scheduled to be complete by 2005.

Since publication of the Draft Supplemental EIS, construction has begun on several additional housing developments in the project study area.

- Valentine Estates and Mountain View Estates in Woods Cross.
- Birnam Woods and Olsen Farms in West Bountiful.
- Miller Meadows in Farmington.

Valentine Estates, located at 2100 S. Redwood Road in Woods Cross, includes plans for 93 single-family homes and 182 multi-family units. Mountain View Estates, located at 1500 S. Redwood Road in Woods Cross, includes plans for approximately 175 single-family homes.

Birnam Woods, located at 2200 N. 800 W. in West Bountiful, includes plans for 110 single-family homes. Olsen Farms, located at 1600 N. 1000 W. in West Bountiful, also includes plans for 11 single-family homes.

Miller Meadows, located north of Glovers Lane near 650 West and 700 South in Farmington, includes plans for 107 single-family homes.

The discussion of these seven housing developments updates the information presented in the Final EIS on views of the proposed highway from the study area, as well as views of the surrounding area from the proposed highway.

14.8.2.2 Visual Resources in Study Area Viewed from Offsite

As described in the Final EIS, four main offsite locations comprising 10 KOPs were used to assess views of Legacy Parkway: the Redwood Road area (KOPs 6, 7, and 8), the Davis County foothills area (KOPs 4 and 5), the I-15 area (KOPs 1, 2, and 3), and areas near the FBWMA (KOPs 20 and 21) (Figure 4.18-1). Section 3.18.2 of the Final EIS provides a complete description of the foreground, middle ground, and background views typical for these KOPs. Most viewer groups that would view the proposed highway would be located in the residential developments to the east of the proposed alignments.

Construction of the residential developments listed above would increase the potential number of offsite viewers that would have views of the proposed highway. Specifically, the residents of the Foxboro, Valentine Estates, Mountain View Estates, Birnam Woods, and Olsen Farms developments would have views of the proposed highway similar to that described for the Redwood Road area (KOP 6). The view that the residents of the Farmington Ranches and Miller Meadows housing developments would have of the proposed highway would be most similar to that described for the area on and near the FBWMA (KOP 20).

Typical activities of the viewers in the Redwood Road areas when viewing the proposed highway would include driving or spending time inside their homes or outside in their yards. Typical activities of the viewers in the area near FBWMA would include bird watching, hiking, fishing, and hunting.

4.18.2.3 Offsite Visual Resources Viewed from Study Area

As described in the Final EIS, four KOPs were used to represent visual resources looking from the study area to offsite locations: West Farmington (KOP 9), Farmington Bay (KOP 10), West Bountiful (KOP 11), and Redwood Road (KOP 12). These views generally represent an urban viewshed, consisting of a highly varied mix of industrial, commercial, and residential elements, including large warehouses, older small units, and other types of buildings and complexes. Construction of the residential developments listed above would further emphasize the mix of urban visual elements in the study area.

4.18.3 Environmental Consequences and Mitigation Measures

The Final EIS described two types of impacts associated with visual resources in the study area: those tied to temporary construction activities and those associated with the operation of the proposed build alternatives. Since publication of the Final EIS, the nature and intensity of these impacts have not changed significantly; however, slight changes to the proposed highway design and continued development in the study area would reduce the operation-related visual impacts of the proposed highway when viewed from certain offsite locations. The environmental consequences associated with impacts on visual resources in the study area and the proposed mitigation measures to minimize these effects are summarized below.

4.18.3.1 Construction-Related Visual Impacts

Construction-related visual impacts are described in Section 4.20, *Construction Impacts*, of this document.

4.18.3.2 Operation-Related Visual Impacts

As described in the Final EIS, operation-related visual impacts were assessed from two perspectives: that of a viewer looking at the study area from an offsite location and that of a viewer looking at an offsite location from the study area (i.e., views from the proposed highway). The Visual Resources Contrast Rating System mentioned in Section 4.18.1 above was used in the Final EIS to determine the impacts a proposed build alternative would have on the existing viewshed, i.e., the extent to which a build alternative would contrast with the existing viewshed. This system uses a numerical scale of 1 to 4, with 4 representing the greatest contrast (impact). Section 4.18 of the Final EIS provides a detailed explanation of how this rating system was applied to evaluate project-related impacts on visual resources.

The nature and intensity of the operation-related visual impacts have not changed significantly since publication of the Final EIS, except that residents of the new housing developments constructed since publication of the Final EIS would now have views of the proposed highway from their communities. However, a reduction in the proposed embankment height associated with all the proposed build alternatives and the continued construction of these new housing developments would reduce the operation-related visual impacts of the proposed highway from certain offsite locations. The following describes the impacts associated with the alternatives from the two different viewer perspectives.

Visual Resources in Study Area Viewed from Offsite

No-Build Alternative

Existing Conditions (2004)

There would be no operation-related visual impacts under the existing conditions No-Build Alternative because none of the proposed build alternatives would be constructed.

Future Conditions (2020)

If none of the build alternatives is implemented, future residential, commercial, and industrial infrastructure will continue to be constructed in the study area. In addition, future transportation improvement projects may be undertaken by local jurisdictions in the study area to address capacity needs not being met by the proposed action. These projects would affect the visual quality of the study area when viewed from an offsite location. Because the nature and timing of these projects are not known at this time, however, these impacts are difficult to assess.

Build Alternatives

Visual resource impacts from the perspective of a viewer looking at the study area from an offsite location were described in the Final EIS based on the four offsite areas (10 KOPs) described above in Section 4.18.2.2. Since publication of the Final EIS, an additional adverse operation-related visual impact has been identified because all the residents in the seven new housing developments being constructed in the study area would have a direct view of the proposed highway.

In addition, since publication of the Final EIS, the embankment height associated with all the proposed build alternatives has been reduced from 2.7 m (9 ft) to 1.8 m (6 ft), except in floodplain areas, to reduce the amount of required fill material. This reduced embankment height would create a lower profile roadway that would be less visible from offsite. This reduction in the height of the embankment would reduce the visual impact of all the proposed build alternatives on the surrounding area; however, the permanent visual presence of pavement, fill slopes, grade separations, lighting, roadway hardware, and drainage structures would still result in an adverse operation-related visual impact, as described in the Final EIS.

The new housing developments would also reduce the visual impact of the proposed highway when viewed from the Davis County foothills area (KOPs 4 and 5) (Figure 4.18-1). As described in the Final EIS, both I-15 and several large industrial areas would block views of the proposed highway from the Davis County foothills area; the construction of these new developments would further block views of the highway for viewers in the higher elevation offsite residential areas in the foothills. Therefore, the impact conclusions disclosed in the Final EIS have not changed.

Visual Impact Ratings

Table 4-39a in the Final EIS presents the results of the contrast rating for each of the proposed build alternatives at the 10 offsite KOP locations. These visual impact ratings have not changed since publication of the Final EIS. Although reducing the embankment height generally creates a lower-profile roadway, it would not substantially alter the visual impact ratings presented in those tables because the embankments are not entirely eliminated. The continued development of land in the study area for residential, commercial, and industrial uses, along with viewer activity, was already accounted for in the visual impact ratings presented in the Final EIS.

Offsite Visual Resource Viewed from Study Area

No-Build Alternative

Existing Conditions (2004)

There would be no operation-related visual impacts under the existing conditions No-Build Alternative because none of the proposed build alternatives would be constructed.

Future Conditions (2020)

If none of the build alternatives is implemented, future residential, commercial, and industrial infrastructure will continue to be constructed in the study area. In addition, future transportation improvement projects may be undertaken by local jurisdictions in the study area to address capacity needs not being met by the proposed action. These projects would affect the views from the study area to offsite locations. Because the nature and timing of these projects are not known at this time, however, these impacts are difficult to assess.

Build Alternatives

Visual resource impacts, from the perspective of a viewer in the study area (i.e., using the proposed highway or adjacent trail) looking at an offsite location, were described in the Final EIS based on the four KOPs, as described above in Section 4.18.2.3. As stated in the Final EIS, the greatest visual impact on viewers in the study area looking offsite would be the highway itself. The permanent visual background presence of pavement, fill slopes, grade separations, lighting, roadway hardware, and drainage structures would have the greatest long-term operation-related visual impact associated with the project, particularly for the motorists driving on the proposed highway and for those in its immediate proximity. The inclusion of the proposed Legacy Nature Preserve into the build alternatives would provide improved views west of the highway due to restoration activities, including the removal of debris and revegetation of certain areas.

Visual Impact Ratings

Table 4-39b in the Final EIS presents the results of the contrast rating for each proposed build alternative at the four KOP onsite locations. These visual impact ratings have not changed since publication of the Final EIS.

4.18.3.3 Mitigation Measures

As described in the Final EIS, landscaping, a berm/buffer area, and a trail system have been integrated into the design of all the proposed build alternatives to minimize operation-related visual impacts. Section 4.18.3 of the Final EIS describes different approaches that would be applied to different areas to minimize visual impacts.